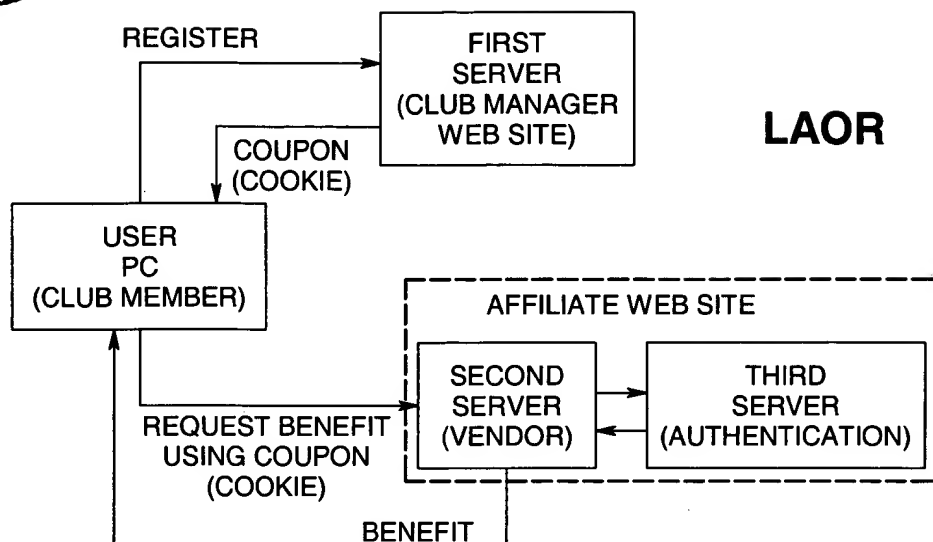


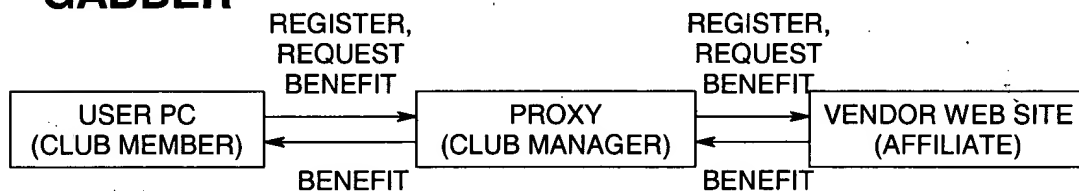
ARGUMENT

Claims 27-31, 33, 36-40, 42, 45, 47, and 48 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Laor (US Pat. 6,076,069) and further in view of Gabber et al. (US Pat. 5,961,593)(hereinafter Gabber).

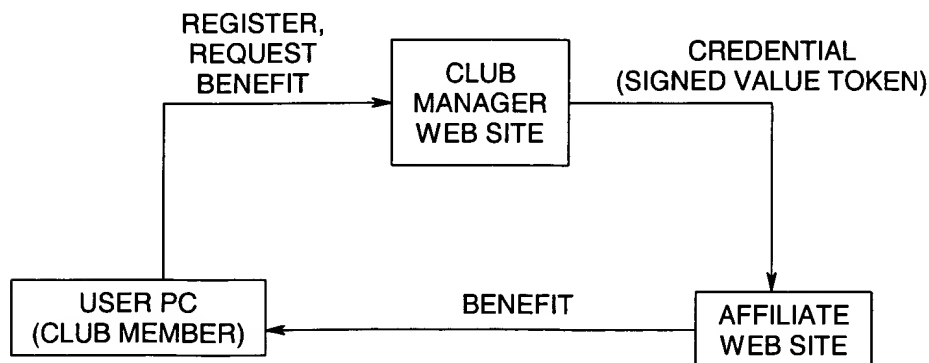
In discussing this rejection, the Applicants have determined that a figure comparing the architectures of the systems described by Laor, Gabber, and the present specification may be instructive for identifying the fundamental differences between the cited art and the present invention. The Examiner is directed to the figure shown below.



GABBER



PRESENT INVENTION



In the system taught by Laor, the user (i.e., club member) operates his or her PC to communicate with a web site run by a first server. The user registers with the

first server and receives a coupon in the form of a cookie in return. This cookie is stored on the user's PC. The first server may be thought of as analogous to the claimed club member web site. When the user wishes to redeem the coupon, the user communicates with a web site run by a second server by making the request for a benefit. The second server interrogates the cookie stored on the user's PC, and communicates with a third server to authenticate the cookie's data. The second and third servers may be thought of collectively as analogous to the claimed affiliate web site. If the coupon is valid (as determined by interrogating and authenticating the cookie), then the user receives the benefit. Note that the use of the cookie is instrumental in making this system work, and that the system is invasive with regard to the integrity of the user's PC because the second server must read the cookie from the user's PC.

In the system taught by Gabber, anonymous web browsing is made possible by using a proxy. In Gabber's system, a cookie is not used. Instead, the user's PC (i.e., the club member) communicates with the proxy server to register with a club and request a benefit. The proxy server then communicates with a vendor web site to register the user and request the benefit. Since the proxy is always in the middle of this communication, the proxy may be programmed to forward to the vendor only information needed to obtain the benefit, without providing identification of the club member. In this system, the vendor web site may be thought of as analogous to the claimed affiliate web site and the proxy may be thought of as analogous to the claimed club manager web site. The requested benefit may be sent through the proxy back to the club member. Note that the club member cannot communicate directly with the vendor web site or server, since the proxy (i.e., the club manager) handles all communication with the club member.

In marked contrast to the systems of Laor and Gabber, the present invention operates in a fundamentally different manner as follows. The club member communicates with the club manager web site to register as a club member and to request a benefit (after viewing or otherwise receiving information about club benefits from the club manager). The club manager web site communicates directly with the affiliate web site by sending a credential to the affiliate, the credential

including the value token associated with the club member. The affiliate web site authenticates the credential, and provides the benefit directly to the club member if the credential is valid.

Note that no cookies or other intrusive measures are used. Note also that the club member receives the benefit directly from the affiliate web site without having to communicate further with the club manager. No proxy servers or proxy web sites are used. These limitations have been added to claim 27 to more particularly recite the present invention and to distinguish the present invention over the cited prior art. Additionally, the Applicants wish to point out that the limitations of claim 27 specifically require a particular arrangement of entities and communications paths. There are three entities: the club manager web site, the affiliate web site, and the club member (i.e., user's PC and browser). The club member communicates with the club manager web site to register as a club member and to request a benefit. The club manager web site communicates with the affiliate web site to send the credential including the value token to the affiliate web site. The club member communicates with the affiliate web site to receive the benefit associated with the credential without further communication with the club manager (and without using a cookie). These recited limitations of separate elements and particular communications paths must be considered in assessing the patentability of the claim.

It is submitted that claim 27 as amended is not taught or suggested by the combination of Laor and Gabber, because several limitations contained in claim 27 are missing from the cited prior art systems. Neither Laor or Gabber, alone or in combination, teach or suggest the specific arrangement of the club manager web site, affiliate web site, and club member as described above and in the Specification, and as claimed in claim 27, taking into account all limitations and looking at the claim as a whole. In fact, substituting the cookie system of Laor with the proxy system of Gabber would not result in the claimed invention because the claimed invention does not use a proxy as a club manager to be "in the middle" of all communication (i.e., a conduit) between a user/club member and an affiliate web site. The arrangement of entities as claimed in the present invention is

fundamentally different than the cited art. The combination of the cited art would not result in the claimed invention. Therefore, a prima facie case of obviousness cannot be made based on the cited art. Claim 27 is allowable as presented.

As to claim 28, it depends from allowable claim 27. Gabber's system does appear to allow for an anonymous club member. However, the way it does this is by using a proxy server as the club manager. The present invention does not use a proxy server, as discussed above. Since claim 28 depends from allowable claim 27, it is also allowable.

As to claims 29 and 30, they depend from allowable claim 27. Therefore, they are also allowable.

As to claim 31 and 40, these claims as amended require that no further interaction between the club member and the club manager web site take place during the operation of providing the benefit to the club member by the affiliate web site. In contrast, Gabber teaches a proxy system where the club manager is a proxy server that serves as a conduit for all communications between the club member and the affiliate web site. As such, Gabber teaches away from this limitation of claims 31 and 40. Furthermore, the combination of Laor and Gabber would not produce a system that performs the recited steps by the appropriate entities in the recited order. Since Gabber teaches a proxy server, the communication steps recited in claims 31 and 40 cannot be performed as claimed by a system composed of the teachings of Gabber and Laor. Since the combination of Laor and Gabber do not teach or suggest claims 31 and 40 (taken as a whole), these claims are allowable. Therefore, claims 31 and 40 are allowable as presented.

As to claims 33 and 42, since they depend from allowable independent claims 31 and 40, respectively, they are also allowable.

As to claims 36 and 45, since they depend from allowable independent claims 31 and 40, respectively, they are also allowable.

As to claims 37 and 46, they depend from allowable claim 31 and claim 40, respectively. Hence, claims 37 and 46 are also allowable.

In regard to claims 38 and 47, the claimed limitations are neither in the cited text of Gabber, nor found elsewhere in Gabber. Gabber teaches using an electronic

form on a web page to obtain information from the user. This operation is performed by a single web site (e.g., the NY Times web site as shown in Gabber at col. 11, line 7). The form on the web page in Gabber does not teach or suggest anything about communicating signed value tokens between web sites. Instead, Gabber simply teaches using a form to obtain data from a user from a *single* web page. Gabber does not teach or suggest using a form post from a club manager web site to an affiliate web site to pass a signed value token. In addition, claims 38 and 47 depend from allowable claims 31 and 40. Claims 38 and 47 are allowable as presented.

As to claims 39 and 48, the cited text of Gabber merely describes displaying an HTML document in a browser (as is currently notoriously well known). Neither Gabber nor Laor, alone or in combination, teach the claimed limitation of passing a signed value token between a club manager web site to an affiliate web site in a DHTML link using the web browser of the club member. Merely mentioning web browsers and HTML is insufficient to teach or suggest the claimed limitation. The claim must be examined as a whole; the limitation is not found in the references because the references do not teach or suggest passing a signed value token between a club manager web site to an affiliate web site in a DHTML link using the web browser of the club member. In addition, claims 39 and 47 depend from allowable claims 31 and 40. Claims 39 and 48 are allowable as presented.

Claims 32, 35, 41, and 44 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Laor and Gabber, further in view of Barnett, et al. (US 6,321,208)(hereinafter Barnett).

As to claims, 32 and 41, since they depend from allowable independent claims 31 and 40, respectively, they are also allowable.

Claims 34 and 43 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Laor and Gabber, further in view of Eggleston, et al. (US 6,061,660)(hereinafter Eggleston).

As to claims, 34 and 43, since they depend from allowable independent claims 31 and 40, respectively, they are also allowable.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Claims 27-48 are all in condition for allowance. If the Examiner has any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at (503) 264-8074. Early issuance of Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: _____

9/17/02

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17 SEPTEMBER 2002
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DEBORAH L. HIGHAM
Name of Person Mailing Correspondence

SDH 9/17/02
Signature Date

Copy of claims as amended in this response:

27. (once amended) An electronic commerce system comprising:

a club manager web site to create a club, the club manager web site including a registration component to register users as club members, and a credential creation component to create a value token associating a selected club member with entitlement to a benefit and to cryptographically sign the value token to create a credential;

at least one affiliate web site [coupled to]communicating with the club manager web site to receive the credential directly from the club manager web site, the at least one affiliate web site including a credential verification component to verify the authenticity of the value token of the credential, and a benefit provision component to provide the benefit to the selected club member on demand if the value token is valid; and

at least one club member [coupled to]communicating with the club manager web site to register for the club and to request the benefit, and [coupled to]communicating with the at least one affiliate web site to receive the benefit from the at least one affiliate web site without further interaction between the at least one club member and the club manager, and without using a cookie stored by the at least one club member.

28. The system of claim 27, wherein the club member is anonymous from the perspective of the club manager and the at least one affiliate.

29. The system of claim 27, wherein the club member comprises a user's personal computer and web browser.

30. The system of claim 27, wherein the value token comprises a randomly selected transaction identifier associating the club member with the benefit, but not identifying any characteristics of the club member.

31. (once amended) A method of securely passing a value token representing entitlement to a benefit between web sites in an electronic commerce system comprising:

- registering a user as a member of a club by a club manager web site;
- authenticating the club member and offering the benefit to the club member in a link to an affiliated web site;
- generating a value token associating the club member with entitlement to the benefit due to membership in the club;
- cryptographically signing the value token;
- communicating the signed value token from the club manager web site directly to the affiliated web site without storing the signed value token by the club member;
- verifying, by the affiliated web site, that the signed value token is valid;
- providing the benefit to the club member by the affiliated web site when the signed value token is valid without further interaction between the club member and the club manager web site.

32. The method of claim 31, further comprising registering the signed value token as used by the affiliated web site, thereby preventing the club member from subsequently obtaining the benefit.

33. The method of claim 31, wherein the club manager web site and the affiliated web site are operated by different entities.

34. The method of claim 31, further comprising billing the club member web site, by the affiliated web site, for the benefit delivered to the club member.

35. The method of claim 31, further comprising verifying, by the affiliated web site, that the value token has not been previously used by any club member.

36. The method of claim 31, wherein the value token comprises a randomly selected transaction identifier associating the club member with the benefit, but not identifying any characteristics of the club member.

37. The method of claim 31, wherein the value token is unique for a combination of the club member, the affiliated web site, and the benefit.

38. The method of claim 31, wherein communicating the signed value token from the club manager web site to the affiliated web site comprises passing the signed value token as part of a form post to the affiliated web site.

39. The method of claim 31, wherein communicating the signed value token from the club manager web site to the affiliated web site comprises passing the signed value token in a dynamic hyper text markup language (DHTML) link by using a web browser of the club member.

40. (once amended) An article comprising: a machine accessible medium having a plurality of machine accessible instructions, wherein when the instructions are executed by at least one processor, the instructions securely pass a value token representing entitlement to a benefit between web sites in an electronic commerce system by

- registering a user as a member of a club by a club manager web site;
- authenticating the club member and offering the benefit to the club member in a link to an affiliated web site;
- generating a value token associating the club member with entitlement to the benefit due to membership in the club;
- cryptographically signing the value token;
- communicating the signed value token from the club manager web site directly to the affiliated web site without storing the signed value token by the club member;
- verifying, by the affiliated web site, that the signed value token is valid;

providing the benefit to the club member by the affiliated web site when the signed value token is valid without further interaction between the club member and the club manager web site.

41. The article of claim 40, further comprising instructions for registering the signed value token as used by the affiliated web site, thereby preventing the club member from subsequently obtaining the benefit.

42. The article of claim 40, wherein the club manager web site and the affiliated web site are operated by different entities.

43. The article of claim 40, further comprising instructions for billing the club member web site, by the affiliated web site, for the benefit delivered to the club member.

44. The article of claim 40, further comprising instructions for verifying, by the affiliated web site, that the value token has not been previously used by any club member.

45. The article of claim 40, wherein the value token comprises a randomly selected transaction identifier associating the club member with the benefit, but not identifying any characteristics of the club member.

46. The article of claim 40, wherein the value token is unique for a combination of the club member, the affiliated web site, and the benefit.

47. The article of claim 40, wherein instructions for communicating the signed value token from the club manager web site to the affiliated web site comprises instructions for passing the signed value token as part of a form post to the affiliated web site.

48. The article of claim 40, wherein instructions for communicating the signed value token from the club manager web site to the affiliated web site comprises instructions for passing the signed value token in a dynamic hyper text markup language (DHTML) link by using a web browser of the club member.